

Doctors Worldwide Medical Relief in Yemen

December 2011-January 2012

As a consequence to the popular movement initiated against the government in Yemen, there have been an increasing number of civilian deaths and many heavy wounded people need urgent medical care. In this country we have been witnessing the longest process within the “Arab Spring”. Indeed, launched at the end of January 2011, the popular movement protesting against Saleh’s government is about to come to a conclusion after one year of ongoing demonstrations. So far this internal conflict has caused approximately 1200 deaths and around 3000 civilians have been severely injured.

At Doctors Worldwide Turkey, we did not “discover” Yemen when it finally attracted the media attention few weeks ago. Actually, struck by the terrible health indicators of this country, we decided to implement a project in Yemen at beginning of January 2011 but unfortunately the latter had to be postponed because of the internal conflict that started few weeks later.

The project was born on January 2011 when DWW sent a six-people team to carry on a need assessment and decided to cooperate with a local partner: Al-Eslah Welfare Society. Following this exploratory mission, DWW opted for the implementation of three different projects in the region of Hardamutin order to increase the capacity of rural health infrastructure. The projects were launched but unfortunately they were interrupted because of the political instability.

In December, Yemen was back on our agenda when representatives of the Yemen Civil Solidarity Platform came to Istanbul to meet with DWWT, advocating for their essential action and stressing on the crucial need for specialist physicians to operate on the heavy wounded.

Following this visit, on December 27th a team of 7 specialists was sent to Yemen for a week. They performed 32 complex surgeries and provided medical examination to 270 heavy wounded patients in both public and private hospitals. Through this humanitarian action, DWWT team in Sanaa attracted a lot of attention from civilians and bureaucrats as being the first and only international NGO in health sector working in Yemen since the outbreak of the internal conflict.

After this initial project, the successful surgeries are to be followed up by local doctors and 10 heavy wounded patients will soon come to Turkey to receive appropriate treatment.

Besides, taking into account the new situation in Yemen after the uprising and the civil conflict, DWWT has also designed new projects based on surgical

medical assistance in contexts of emergency, in particular to meet with the needs for orthopedics, plastic surgery and peripheral nerve surgery that have been observed on the field.

DWWT will also provide support for medical supplies within the field hospital that was established to serve wounded patients.

Amongst the specific needs, our team has identified 82 patients with peripheral nerve injury which requires a difficult and long treatment. Therefore, DWWT is planning to periodically send specialist to Yemen to provide adequate treatment to these patients. For further sustainability we are also planning to provide local physicians with intensive training.

To deal with some of the dramatic consequences of the conflict, a rehabilitation center is planned to be installed to serve paralyzed patients and other patients in need of psychological support.

Soon DWWT will also reactivate an endoscopy-laparoscopy-arthroscopy project that was delayed because of the internal conflict. It plans the establishment of a specific unit in Hardamuts. In order to improve the capacities of this local structure, specialist physicians will be sent to the region and a relevant training will be provided to Yemeni physicians in Turkey.